

Notions abordées : Idée de progrès & Lieu et formes de pouvoir

An interview with Dr. Robert Pastor by Shelly De Vito

US voice

The Democratic Electoral System in the US

Dr. Pastor: I'm the co-Director of the Centre for Democracy and Election Management at American University in Washington.

The U.S. system was the most innovative and the most progressive system in the 18th century when it was first set up and in much of the 19th century. I think since then, the system has not renovated itself, and I think in many ways is one of the most antiquated systems.

Our system's both greatest strength and greatest liability is it's local in character. There is no national election commission responsible for the elections; the rules are set at the county and the local level; there are 13,000 sovereign units in the United States that set rules on how to manage and conduct the election, all quite different from each other. Very few of those boards that are responsible for elections at a local level are non-partisan. The French system, on the other hand, has the entire system run from the Ministry of Interior, from the government. Most developing countries realize that that's a very bad way to do it, because it allows a government, an incumbent government, to control the process and to bias the process. None of the new democracies have looked to the United States and France. It's unfortunate that neither the United States nor France looks now to the developing world to modernize their own electoral systems.